Perseverance under Discouragement.

A

SECOND ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

TO THE

Congregation of the Church of the Mediator,

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BY

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"BUT YE BRETHREN, BE NOT WEARY IN WELL-DOING."

2 *Thess.* iii. 13.

RELIGION consists in ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well. By nature the thoughts of our hearts and the course of our lives are evil, and that continually. Even when we do not actually and intentionally transgress God's law, we live without Him in the world, and on this account at least, are without hope of acceptance before Him, nay, are under his curse and indignation. Our best works, comparatively so called, are not right in His sight, but partake of the nature of sin. But by the grace of God preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that will, we are enabled and inclined to repent of past sin, and turn to God with purpose of heart to do His will. Beholding in the Cross of Christ our "sin displayed in all its blackest hue," and beholding there, "such is the mystery of grace, our certain pardon too," we resolve not to live to ourselves, but to Him, who died for us and rose again. We have now no excuse for continuing any longer in sin, but every motive and every means to perfect holiness in the fear of God. And if we be sincere in our profession, and constant in our prayers, we shall become both blameless and harmless in ourselves, and exemplary and useful to others—illustrating in our lives, that beautiful, that divine description of "pure and undefiled religion; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world," thus causing all candid men to take knowledge of us, that we have been with Him "who did no sin, neither was guile or reviling found in his mouth," but who did "go about doing good to all men"—nay, constraining

even those who are inclined to "speak against us as evil doers, when they behold our good works, to glorify God in the day of visitation."

But alas! do professing Christians thus lay aside every weight, resist unto blood, striving against sin, and run with patience the race set before them, looking only unto Jesus, and being ever followers of that which is good? Do they thus deny themselves, devote themselves to Christ and labor for the good of men?

The inspired Apostle, who must have known what was in man, seems to have apprehended the contrary. He seems to fear that they would grow "weary in well-doing," and solemnly warns them of this danger and this sin. Nay, he declares that some of the professing Christians in this Church of Thessalonica, to whom he was now writing the second time, had acted very inconsistently. They "walked disorderly, working not at all, but were busy-bodies," thus both neglecting their bounden duty and committing a positive sin. It was their duty "to eat their own bread," if by any possibility they could get their own living, no matter in what way, provided it was an honest way; and it was a sin to be meddling in other men's matters, except when humbly and disinterestedly endeavoring to do them good. Indeed, some of them had behaved so badly and brought such discredit on the Christian cause, that the Apostle directed their brethren to withdraw from their society, and have no company with them further than their domestic and professional relations required, so that they might be ashamed, or at least that they themselves might be clear of the imputation of approving their conduct.

But the Apostle did not mean, that they should speedily give up all endeavors to reclaim these erring brethren, or do them any needed service in their power. Because the offenders did not reform their conduct, or because their kindness had been abused by them, they might be deterred

from any further effort in their behalf, or even in behalf of any others, or they might catch the contagion of their evil example, and grow remiss in their own duties. Thus, they who had run well for a time might slacken their pace, or suffer their steps to be turned out of the way of righteousness.

And who does not see that all need the like exhortation? How many of the members of any Christian church are not as blameless and useful as they might and ought to be? How few are there, who in one or both of these respects "do more than others?" How often do ministers have cause to blush for the alleged conduct of their people, their want of purity and charity, or of zeal and self-devotion? Some who give no positive "offence in anything," yet show no active love. Others who are ardent in some departments of benevolent and missionary labor, are far from being of a meek and quiet spirit. Some seem to think it enough to be members of the Church, coming regularly to service and communion; some seem to be satisfied with themselves without this, because, they say, they are no hypocrites; some who have at times come to the table of the Lord, have become indifferent to the privilege, or are unwilling to live as becomes partakers of that holy communion. Some become unsettled in their doctrines, or at least in their habits, and begin to wander from Church to Church, heaping to themselves teachers, and deserting the pastor who has long watched for their souls, and perhaps has found food and raiment for their bodies, especially if he has the courage to exhort and rebuke them, though at the risk of losing the pecuniary support they could give. Many make a habit of going to see every new Church, and hear every passing stranger, thus leaving their own seats vacant, setting a bad example to others, discouraging and defeating the efforts of their own anxious and laborious pastors, and losing the benefit of the exertions

which are made for their own spiritual welfare. They even attend more regularly upon, and give more liberally to many other "Associations," which are formed for social enjoyment or temporal advantage, though these, however pleasant or useful, can claim no such authority, and confer no such "benefit" as the worship of God and the ministrations of the Gospel.

So, that with the prophet of old, we are often constrained to say, "Oh, Ephraim, what shall I do to thee, for thy righteousness is as the early dew, that passeth away," leaving a dry and thirsty land when the sun arises, and bringing no fruit to perfection. Seldom does the ground we plant and water, guard and cultivate, bring forth even "thirty-fold" of outward increase, much more seldom can we hope, that all who are added to the list of worshippers or communicants are "such as shall be saved." How few do their part in supporting the Church, though it depends entirely, in this country upon the contributions of its members. Even those who are industrious in their callings and honest in their dealings, are not "willing to give, and glad to distribute," either to the necessity of saints, the spread of the Gospel, or even the support and improvement of their own Church. They hoard up all they get, or spend it upon themselves; but are afraid to lend it to the Lord, and forget how much they owe unto him, and ought to pay, as to their highest creditor, for the support of his ministers, who serve them in the Gospel, and for the supply of that which is necessary for the worship of God and the teaching of his truth. They have no proper pride in this; they are willing to depend upon the charity of others, and burden heavily a few, instead of doing all they can for themselves, and dividing the burden equally among all, according to their ability.

Again, how many of those who sometimes are active in doing good, grow weary in well-doing. How ready they

are to magnify the importance of what they have done, and then to argue that they have done enough, and may claim to "rest from their labors," even while God continues the strength and means to do much more. And how ready they are to be discouraged because their efforts are not immediately successful, or not entirely appreciated by others. When they should remember that all which they can do is a privilege, not a burden, in which they should rejoice and give thanks instead of murmuring and complaining; that they ought to render every "service as to the Lord, and not to man," knowing that whether their work of faith be prospered or not, it cannot be vain in the Lord; and that he permits them often to fail of immediate success, and to be disappointed in their expectations from man, that they may find their rest in Him, that they may be satisfied with His smile, and find in it alone their "exceeding great reward." Nay, more, He often "stays in His own day," only to test the sincerity and simplicity of their faith and their patience of hope. The very object of the apparent indifference of the great Head of the Church and the withholding of his Spirit, is to make us importunate in prayer, watching and laboring for the result "with all perseverance;" and if we fail in this, we shall justly and certainly lose the fruit of our labor, however zealous or self-denying for the time, it may have been.

Hence the Apostle strengthens his admonition of danger and his exhortation to duty by saying, "in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not," implying, of course, that if we do faint, we shall *not* reap, but otherwise we shall in due season—in those times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, and given to the Son also to determine, and in those ways which seem best to His infinite wisdom. Results are with Him, duties only are ours; but if we do the one, we shall see the other; and though "God's ways are not as our ways," we shall in the end acknowledge that they were higher than ours, as the results will prove, "better than we can ask or think," and more than we could "desire or deserve."

This exhortation is appropriate at all times to those who profess and call themselves Christians. To all of you who have set out on the Christian race, and have witnessed a good confession before many witnesses, whether in Confirmation or in Communion, I desire to say, "be not weary in well-doing." Never repent of your repentance, nor be ashamed of your confession, nor neglect to renew the vow which binds you to your Lord and Saviour. Resolve to be ever and openly on the Lord's side, and He will be on yours; but forsake him and He will cast you off. Draw back from his service and your last state will be worse than the first. Neglect to acknowledge him, and He will not assist you in your prayers, nor prosper your endeavors. The vows of God are upon you; they are registered in the records of the Church below, and in the book of God's remembrance above. Let them not witness against you, and prove your unfaithfulness. Rather say in humble confidence, on bended knees, secretly and in the congregation,

> "High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
> That vow renewed shall daily hear,
> Till in life's latest hour I bow,
> And bless in death a bond so dear."

But more especially I wish to address these words to you to-day as a *congregation*, with reference to the duties which devolve upon you in your associated capacity, under the circumstances in which God's providence has placed you. To-day completes a second year since I undertook the charge of this congregation, and I desire to inform you of the progress we have made, and the discouragements we have met with, which seem to me specially to require an *exhortation to perseverance in well-doing.*

The previous year was a period of almost unmingled

encouragement and marked progress in our parochial affairs, spiritual and temporal; and you may remember that at the close of it, I expressed to you my sense of God's undeserved and distinguishing goodness, by applying to ourselves the words which Samuel spake, when "he took a stone and set it up between Mispeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-Ezer, saying, hitherto hath the Lord helped us." For although your affairs had been reduced to great extremity previous to my coming among you, and though our public services were seriously interrupted during three months of the winter, by the alterations and improvements which were deemed necessary in this building, yet the congregation was greatly increased and the income of the Church also. We then had good reason to hope, that by the end of a second year the building itself would be completed by the erection of the *tower*, which is so essential to its exterior appearance, and that the resources of the Church would be equal to its expenditures. Meanwhile the subscriptions of our friends, who at first enabled me to assume this charge, were willingly and generously renewed.

But alas! I need hardly tell you, what a change came over all the pecuniary resources of our city, and all the enterprises of the members of our Church, during the last autumn. On the the one hand, thousands and tens of thousands of our laboring classes were thrown out of employment, and on the other, as many of our wealthy citizens were deprived of their usual income, and of all power to help their brethren. Not a Church in the city, even the largest and strongest, but has been crippled in its power to do good. Our own, which before had everything to hope, but nothing to spare, has been sadly hindered in its progress. Many of our pewholders have been unable to contribute anything towards the Church, and some who were obliged to retrench their expenditures, of course began *here*. Some who felt unable to contribute anything to the

support of the Church, have given up their seats, or delayed to take any, on this account; though none of those who administer our affairs, would have desired or permitted this if they could have prevented it. Many were, for a season, hardened under this trial, and instead of seeking comfort in God's word and ordinances, gave themselves up to sullen pride or evil living. Not a few of our kindest friends were unable to make good their promises, or continue their exertions for us; and in addition to this, several were obliged to remove from the neighborhood, and withdraw both their support and co-operation. The expenses and attractions of several new enterprises in the city, and more than one in our neighborhood, have necessarily diminished the amount of our resources, and the number of our attendants. Although I hope and believe, that in due time all these will find abundant scope for their labors, and prove a blessing to the community and to each other. Moreover, since the severity of the winter was past, a great deal of sickness has ensued. My own services among you were entirely suspended during the most interesting and fruitful season of pastoral labor, the season of Lent, and many of our most zealous helpers in Christ have been obliged, through want of health, to cease their active labors in the Sunday school and elsewhere.

Hence it has been a year of great discouragement and sore trial to our faith. And yet amidst it all, we have been permitted to endure, and in some respects, even to make progress; so that, from these very circumstances, I perceive not only the necessity, but reasonableness of applying to you the injunction, be not weary in well-doing. Indeed, the marvel is not that we have not done better, but that we are still "doing" so "well;" and therefore, we have as yet no reasonable excuse, though, perhaps a plausible temptation, to grow "weary." On the contrary, I hope and pray and believe, that you will "abound more

and more in the work of the Lord," and rest not, till he establish and make this congregation wholly independent and greatly useful.

The congregation now consists of about 160 families, and 350 adults. The communicants number about 160. 60 children and 4 adults have been baptized. A great many persons belong to the congregation, who never, or very seldom, attend Church, from permanent sickness, or domestic necessities. About 300 seats are rented, and are occupied by different persons at different times, leaving more than 200 vacant, though not in many cases unoccupied, since many attend the Church, especially when open at night, who cannot contribute to its support, and all such are gladly welcomed among us, for we desire to make our efforts, as far as possible, useful to all who value them. Three services have been held on every Sunday for six months of the year, and thus opportunities have been given to all our own members, and to our neighbors, to attend on any part of the Sunday which suits their circumstances, and many have thereby attended twice, who otherwise could only have been present once. Our weekly lectures were continued a month longer than usual in most Churches, and even here hitherto, on account of the greater number of attendants than last year; and the Friday evening meeting for prayer in the schoolroom seems to have been a source of peculiar pleasure to the few who were always present, and of profit not only to them and to myself, but also, I verily believe, to those who could not, or cared not to attend it. The monthly catechetical and devotional exercises with the children of the Sunday school and Church Home in the Church, whenever practicable, have been occasions of interest to many besides themselves. Their improvement in singing and behavior has been manifest and gratifying. The Bible classes have been continued, and some of the persons confirmed were the fruits of the labors

of those who conduct them. And though our neighborhood has not partaken largely of the general and wonderful awakening in other parts of the city, a deep seriousness has prevailed. Notwithstanding the serious interruption to my own labors, the services were all sustained and rendered profitable by the kindness of my brethren, and by one of my lay helpers. Sixteen candidates were prepared for Confirmation. Several others were desirous to present themselves, but distrusted their own firmness, and some have ever since regretted that they allowed the opportunity to pass away. A much larger number, about forty, have been added to the Communion, though twenty have died or removed. This Church has dispensed assistance to the poor, through the Dorcas Society, to the amount of $144; besides the large number of garments reported, amounting to six hundred; and through the Communion Alms, $183. The children of the Sunday school have contributed to Sunday school and Missionary purposes more than $100. Our special collections for public objects have amounted to $132. The weekly collections for current expenses, $200. The Church has been assisted by its friends with donations, amounting to nearly $900, which were chiefly applied to the payment of the balance due on the building.

In addition to my ordinary parochial duties, I have been obliged to spend a portion of my time, during the past winter, in securing assistance for the poor and needy, a work which was both more urgent and more difficult than in former seasons. At the request of the Bishop, I consented to act as one of a committee to supervise the operations, and advocate the claims, of the "Aid Office;" and thus at some inconvenience, and in some degree to the hindrance of higher duties, I was enabled to do much for the poor of our own congregation and neighborhood in particular, and for those of our Church and city at large. Another organization in which I could not but feel an in-

terest, and found myself obliged to take a large share of trouble, was the Missionary Association for the Jews of this city, which being a new enterprise, with the nature and merits of which few were acquainted, required much care to organize aright. I have had the satisfaction of seeing it already become an object of special interest with many, and I believe, that as a consequence of its formation, more frequent and hopeful prayers have been offered for Israel's conversion, than ever before.

In my labors in this neighborhood I have observed the great want of Bible and Tract circulation, and endeavored to direct the attention of the Philadelphia Societies to this neglected field. I rejoice to be able to say, that a Female Bible Society for the South-western part of the city has been recently organized, and that several of our members are already active in its direction. I was also struck with the fact, a few weeks since, that while meetings for prayer and exhortation have been established in so many Halls and Hose houses, none were commenced in this neighborhood; and upon application to those engaged in establishing these new but most proper and highly blessed means of grace, two such meetings are now held in different places near us every week, and with good effect upon those who resort thither.

I was enabled also to obtain admission for several of our sick members to the Episcopal Hospital, where they have had every comfort, but the services of a chaplain. There being no Missionary in the neighborhood, I was called thither to baptize a large number of children. I was thankful to be able to secure the temporary appointment of a clergyman, residing near that place, and to procure some small contributions for his support.

To return to our own affairs, in order to impress upon you your own duties, as a congregation. The Vestry recently elected, several of whose members have kindly taken the place of those who are obliged to leave us, have reduced

the expenses of the Church in every possible way; but still find that there must be a deficiency of several hundred dollars; and I am very desirous that this deficiency should be supplied, as I believe it can be, by the congregation themselves. The time has come, when we cannot hope or expect to obtain much more assistance from those not connected with us. They have helped us for many years; but newer enterprises now claim their attention. Our Vestry too, have borne a heavy burden every year, beyond even the ability of some of them, and to a degree greater than could have been fairly expected of any of them. It becomes my duty, therefore, to exhort you all to come up to their help, and "do your own work;" for otherwise the expectations of our friends, who have aided you so long, and the hopes with which I came among you, must all be disappointed; and this Church, instead of rising to independence and usefulness, having a settled pastor acquainted with you all, and identified with you and your children, must sink down into a mere "mission," supplied from time to time by a comparative stranger and mere "sojourner" among you, who must leave you, as soon as he is fitted for a more abiding home, and more fruitful field of labor. I hardly think that you are ready for this result, and I am loth to entertain the prospect. I am not discouraged in any respect but this; and I desire not to "be weary" myself, nor to allow you to be so. I have made great sacrifices of my own comfort and advantage in order to continue among you, and a kind Providence has enabled me to locate myself recently in a more advantageous and accessible manner than before, without being any more burdensome to you. I have no desire for a larger Church, or a richer congregation, and have refused to accept any such, so that I might make full proof of my ministry here; and I ask you to help me to make this experiment successful, and to relieve the Vestry henceforth of anything but the care of

your concerns, and their due portion of the burden. They have deemed it expedient to lower the rent of some of the vacant pews, to suit the means of those who are less able than formerly. They have so distributed the rent of seats that when all are occupied, there will be no deficiency of income. And I desire that all who can, would take sittings for themselves, and persuade their friends to do so. Not that those who are unable to contribute, should thereby be excluded from the services of this house, for as soon as it is full, I am sure that means will not be wanting to enlarge it, and meantime arrangements will be made, whenever necessary, for the accommodation of those who are already, or desire to become attendants. Many Churches have been obliged to raise the price of accommodation; but while this would be impracticable here, I believe it altogether possible for you to increase the weekly *collections* so much as to supply the deficiency of income. These even now amount to $200 a year. Yet who feel in the least what they have given in this way? Some might greatly increase their contributions. If these were but trebled by one half the congregation doubled by the other, your Vestry would be relieved from a burden, which is too heavy for them to bear. And if our friends at large could be persuaded of your readiness to do your part, they would be more content to supply any unavoidable lack of service. For myself, I would rather be half supported by my own people, for whose souls I watch and labor night and day, than be liberally supported by those, to whom I render no service in return.

I must confess, that upon many occasions of special collections I have been surprised and discouraged by the small amount obtained for great and necessary objects, within our own parish or beyond it. Some, indeed, seem glad to distribute, and not unfrequently the contribution of a single individual in this private way, is more than all the rest put

together cast into the treasury. Many objects have seemed to me necessary or expedient for the interest of the Sunday school and Church, for which the Vestry had no funds, and for which I could not well ask a collection, and had not time to solicit private subscriptions; and I find that these expenditures, for which I have been willingly responsible, amount to more than the proceeds of the collections for such objects from the whole congregation. The circulation of the Parish Visitor I have continued at my own risk, believing it to be useful, and finding it generally acceptable, though very few have divided the expense, by contributing the trifling sum which each copy costs. I mention these facts, to show you my own sense of the importance of the enterprises which I commend to your liberality from time to time, to prove that I give you example as well as precept upon this subject, and to persuade you not to withhold or diminish your own contributions, because others give less than you think they ought, but to continue to do all you *can*, and to rejoice in the opportunity of doing "more than others" for the Church which you profess to love.

Especially I desire to see a proof of the interest which all ought to feel in our Sunday schools, which are every where regarded as the hope of the Church and the country. Our building was erected many years ago, and it is now out of repair. At best it would be inferior in its appearance and accommodations, to many which have since been erected upon improved plans. But it is proposed to remedy the defects of it as far as can be done at present, and some contributions are yet needed for this purpose. Within the last month, the Sunday school children have contributed half as much as the rest of the congregation, and are continuing their efforts to raise the sum requisite. The improvement of the building would testify your sense of the importance of the work done in it, would encourage the

hearts of those who labor in this trying but important field, would add to the appearance of the Church itself, and would sustain the interest of the children, who are now much tempted to resort to what they truly call "some nicer place."

In conclusion, let me urge you to be ready to every good work according to your abilities and opportunities. Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might. All can do something. Some can give of their means; some can labor with their hands, or teach in Sunday school, or visit the sick and afflicted; some can persuade their neighbors and friends to help us, and all can *pray* for God's blessing upon the work we have in hand. And when you have done all, say we are unprofitable servants, and give God the praise.